A return to our former good Old Principles *and* Practice, *the only way to restore and preserve our* Peace.

A

SERMON

Preach'd Before the

University *of OXFORD,*

At St. *MARY*'s,

On Sunday, *May* the 14th 1710.

By *WILLIAM TILLY*, B.D. Fellow of *C.C.C. Oxon.* Rector of *Wightham* near *Oxford:* And Domestick Chaplain to The Right Honourable the EARL of *ABINGDON.*

With a Letter to Dr. *Sacheverell.*

The Second Edition.

OXFORD:
Printed by *L. Lichfield*, for *Anth. Peisley:* And are to be Sold by *J. Knapton, H. Clements* and *J. Morphew*, Booksellers in *LONDON.* 1710.

Price Three-Pence.

A LETTER TO Dr. *SACHEVERELL.*

SIR,

I *Send you this Diſcourſe, and this Letter with it, as you are my* Friend; *and as an Inſtance of my hearty Acknowledgments, and my Thanks to you,* in particular, *for the Honour and Reputation of Integrity you have reſtored to your own Order of the Clergy, once more; and the great Service you have done your Church and Country by your good Example; and by your prudent, couragious, and religious Defence of thoſe Doctrines, that were once the Opinions of all the* wiſe *and* honeſt *Men in* England: *and which, by the Aſſiſtance you have given that way, and the good Diſpoſition that appears of late in the People of this Kingdom towards them, we may hope to find ſo* once agen.

But whatever Exceptions ſome Men might take againſt your Doctrine, ſo very unſeaſonable, it muſt be own'd, in this looſe and degenerate Age, 'twas to my greateſt Surprize, that any ſhould attempt a Stain upon your Moral Character; *which we all know here to be ſo very Worthy, and no one more than my ſelf: For I may be bold to ſay, no Man living is better furniſh'd with Evidence to the Contrary of what theſe Men have ſo Slanderouſly reported, than*

I am;

I am; having had my early Education with you, and immediately next to you, from my very Child-hood, in the first Rudiments of Learning; and ever since, very near you, in the same excellent University (of which we are both at present Members) and by this means an entire and thorow Acquaintance with your Person, Inclinations, and Deportment, throughout every Period of your Life. Your Character therefore, as to this point, I am sure ought to have been as free from Censure as any Man's; and indeed would have been so, if the Poison *of some Men's* Tongues, *that flows from the* Gall of Bitterness, *and ill Principles in their Hearts ever yet* had *suffer'd, or ever* could, *any thing that is truly good and excellent to escape them.*

I need not attest your constant and laborious Diligence in your Studies, and that you never had any thing, besides your Duty, more at Heart than your Improvement in useful Learning; these things, Sir, are too well known for me to mention them. And as for your private and more secret Life, I, that was so often with you, know it to be such, as your Enemies could never imitate, and therefore ought not to have defam'd. That strict Vertue, and Sobriety, together with the greatest Easiness, Sprightliness, and Vigor in your Conversation; that brave Presence of Mind and Spirit, at all times, in Opposing any thing that was Dishonest, that ingenuous Openness and Frankness of Temper, that true Christian Simplicity, and perfect Disinterestedness and Freedom from all base and selfish Designs, I have always observ'd and loved in you, as often as I have seen your Person. Your Gratitude to your former greatest Benefactors I have heard

heard them mention themſelves, *to their entire Satisfaction in you. The conſtant and moſt generous Honour, you have always pay'd to your Good* Mother, *She did me the Favour to acquaint me with, her Self, with the tendereſt Expreſſions of Affection for you. And yet theſe are the very Points wherein you have been moſt reflected on, with not the leaſt Reaſon, and therefore with the greateſt Slander. So very* luckily *for you, have your Enemies been miſtaken, though to their own laſting Shame and Reproach, amongſt all that know you: I am ſorry that worthy Perſon, your* Mother *(for whom I have the greateſt Reſpect) could not eſcape her ſhare of unjuſt Reproach with you, and for your Sake, as theſe Men maliciouſly intended: And for which they have more to anſwer, than they think of, if God hear the Cries of the* injur'd Widow, *as he tells us himſelf he does, and will ſurely* vindicate *her. But that's no Argument with* this *ſort of Men,* they *never think of God, or Religion, or their own Duty, or how they break it.*

Theſe things, Sir, I know to be true, *upon the beſt Evidence a Man can have of any thing, my own Experience: And theſe things you muſt give me leave to ſpeak openly to the World, in your behalf, becauſe I could not be your Friend in* concealing *them at this time; and if I ſhould ſay, I did not know them to be true,* I ſhould be a Liar, *ſomewhat like thoſe, that have ſo much traduc'd and injur'd you.*

'Tis a matter of ſad Conſideration in the mean time, and the greateſt Diſcouragement to Vertue and Induſtry that can be, that the beſt *Man's Character is thus far liable to be traduc'd and miſrepreſented by the worſt. And that after a Man has*

ſpent

ſpent great part of his Life in the moſt laborious and painful Studies, to qualify himſelf for the Service of God and his Church, he ſtill lies ſo much at the mercy of Scurrilous Tongues and Pens, for the good effect of all, and may chance to have the influence of all, in a great meaſure, diſappointed by one malignant blaſt *of theſe ill Men's* corrupt *and* ſlanderous Breath.

But we may thank God, you are now *as much above the reach of theſe Men's* Malice, *as you have* always *exceeded them in your* good Life and Principles. *I heartily wiſh the continuance of your Happineſs, and ſhall rejoyce in your Honour as my own; and hope, that in this time of your* Silence, *there will not be wanting others, who ſhall dare Preach and Defend the common Doctrines of Chriſtianity, for which you have ſtood: And I have no diſtruſt, but that the* Great Maſter *whom we ſerve, and who has* hitherto delivered *you,* will yet deliver, *and* preſerve, *both You and Me, and all that love and maintain his holy Truth, againſt all the Malice and Deſigns of Men,* unto his heavenly Kingdom.

2 Cor. 1. 10.

2 Tim. 4. 18.

I am, SIR,

Your moſt Affectionate Friend,

and Servant,

Oxon. *C. C. C.*
June 7*th*,
1710.

WILLIAM TILLY.

JEREMIAH VI. 16.

Thus ſaith the Lord, ſtand ye in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt for your Souls:—

THESE words, we ſee, are deliver'd in God's own immediate *Name*, as well as by his *Authority*, to the Nation of the Jews; and intimate to us the exceeding greatneſs of *Corruption*, that had grown amongſt that People, in that they here expreſs the Remedy for it, with ſo much addreſs of Affection and Concern: *Thus ſaith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way*, implying that they were quite out of the way, at preſent, and had been ſo for a long ſeaſon; and that it was now a matter of no leſs difficulty in it ſelf, than of moment and importance to their happineſs, to *reduce* and ſet them right. And therefore 'tis, we find God here by the Prophet applies himſelf to them in terms of ſuch pathetical earneſtneſs; that he ſets all their *Activity* to work, and employs their utmoſt force of enquiry, in ſearch after the Truth, from which they were gone off; and were now by an inveterate depravation, both in Knowledge and Practice, quite grown ſtiff in Error, and, as it ſeems, hardly to be recover'd. That they were ſo indeed, we need no farther evidence, than to look back to the three former Verſes before my Text: Where the Prophet *ſadly* complains of an univerſal Degeneracy in all Orders and Degrees of Men, and almoſt a total Forfeiture of the Primitive *Integrity* of their *Religion*. In the 13*th* Verſe he tells them, and us, that *from the*

the leaſt of them even to the greateſt of them, every one is given to covetouſneſs; and from the prophet even unto the prieſt, every one dealeth falſely: Their *Laity*, it ſeems, from the Peaſant to the Noble-Man, were wholly ſet upon corrupt Practices of Oppreſſion, Fraud, and Bribery; and the *Church-Men* themſelves had given too much occaſion, and countenance to theſe *Sins of the People*, by their own Example and Authority; by ſoothing great and bad Men in their Vices, for their own private Ends and Ambition; and by taking all opportunities to aſſure them there was no *Danger*, when they were juſt upon the very edge of Ruine: For ſo it follows, Verſe 14*th*, They, that is, the Prieſts and Prophets, *have heal'd alſo the hurt of the daughter of my people ſlightly, ſaying, peace, peace, when there was no peace:* Telling them, that all was *ſafe* and *flouriſhing*, and that to follow the Courſes and Principles they were engag'd in at preſent, was the only true way to *ſettle* the *Nation*, and ſecure the Intereſt both of publick and private Happineſs; for ſo much, I think, the repetition of the word *Peace* may very well import to us.

And yet as bad as we ſee they *were*, and are aſſur'd by God's own Authority they *were*, they had not the leaſt *ſenſe* or *feeling* of it; not ſo much *modeſty* left them, as to acknowledge they had ever been in the *wrong*; And tho' the Prophet by his Threatnings thunder'd in their Ears, and remonſtrated againſt them in God's Name never ſo loudly, yet there was no coming at them; they had not the leaſt reſentment either of their Sin or Danger; their *Principles* were ſo quite perverted, their *Apprehenſion* ſtrongly barr'd againſt all Reproof, and their *Attention* quite *retir'd* and *lull'd* in the deepeſt Security. *For were they aſham'd*, that is, both People and Prieſts together, *when they had committed Abomination?* Nay, *they*
Verſe 15. *were not at all aſham'd, neither could they bluſh.*

To ſuch a wretched ſtate were things reduc'd, that there was hardly any Foundation remaining, any

any good *Old Principles* enough left amongſt that People, to reform them on. He that would make them better, muſt begin with them entirely anew, quite rip up and unravel their preſent inbred ſettled Notions of *Good* and *Evil*, and implant even the very firſt original Seeds of Vertue and Goodneſs in their Souls. So much indeed as this they ſtood in need of, and 'tis no leſs than this, that God himſelf directs them to, in the former part of my Text: *Thus ſaith the Lord, ſtand ye in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein;* that is, put an immediate ſtop to all your preſent Proceedings, for every ſtep, you take *now*, is out of the way, go back to the place from whence you firſt ſet out; and ſince there are ſo many *ways* of Sin and Error, and but one of Truth, ſtand a while at the Head of all theſe *Paths*, and conſider with your ſelves the extreme danger of miſtaking, and that 'tis a point of infinite Concernment to you, that you determine your ſelves to the right: *Stand in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls.*

What was the Conſequence and Iſſue of this Advice, we may ſee at the latter end of *this*, and the following Verſe; but that is not my preſent Buſineſs to conſider.

From the Words I have *now* read before you, I think theſe *Four* following Obſervations do very naturally ariſe.

Firſt, That God here by his Prophet puts that People upon ſo very ſtrict and diligent a ſearch and enquiry for the Truths of Religion, argues an entire Corruption and Apoſtacy in the main Body of that Nation, from the true Knowledge and Practice of their Duty: That they had even loſt the very firſt *Elements* of Vertue, and were perfectly at a *ſtand* and *puzzled*, to find out the *good old* Rules and Principles of Duty, by which their *Forefathers*, for ſo

many Ages, had ſo happily guided and govern'd their Steps: *Stand in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*

Secondly, We may obſerve the Matter and Subject of all this Enquiry here enjoyn'd them, the Old Truths and Principles of Religion, to which the Prophet here directs them; under which Head I think it will not be unneceſſary to ſhew what advantage of Argument the former prevailing *Authority* and *Antiquity* of a Religious Doctrine has, to its being ſound and good above any *new-ſtamp'd modern Pretences* whatſoever; *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*

Thirdly, We have here the proper End, and what ought to be the true Deſign of all our Enquiries and Diſcoveries in Religion, the right Government of our Lives and Practice by its Rules and Precepts: *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.*

Fourthly, We ſee here the bleſſed Event and Conſequence of ſuch a Courſe propos'd; and what good Effects ſo *deſirable* a *return*, both in Knowledge and Practice, would work for any People; a *reſtitution* of them from under their preſent deplorable diſtracted State, to their former happy Days, and quiet Enjoyment of Themſelves and Country: That this is the *only* method to ſave them from their Ruine, and that nothing elſe will do it: *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls.*

And, *Firſt*, that God here by his Prophet puts that People upon ſo very ſtrict and diligent a Search and Enquiry after the Truth, argues an entire Corruption and Revolt, in the great Body of that Nation, from the true Knowledge and Practice of Religion, that they had loſt the very *Elements* and firſt Principles of Vertue, and were perfectly at a ſtand and puzzled to find out the good *old* Laws and Rules

of

of Duty, which their Forefathers had ſo long, and ſo happily profeſs'd, and acted by. We find the Holy *Prophets* often lamenting the diſmal Effects of a National Ignorance in Matters of Religion; and that Men's Minds were grown into ſuch a *ruſt*, by not attending to the Light of Truth, or had contracted ſo perverſe a *bent*, by acting contrary to it, that they could not tell how to take hold of them by any *application* whatſoever, nor knew where to begin their firſt *Inſtructions; Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? and whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine?* ſays *Iſaiah*, *them that are wean'd from the milk, and drawn from the breaſt*; intimating to us, that hardly any of thoſe of riper Years were capable of good Impreſſions, by reaſon of an old Stubborn Indiſpoſition they were under, from former Errors and Prejudices. And that even amongſt thoſe, who were in the beſt and neareſt Preparation to this purpoſe, yet there was no ſmall *difficulty* to be expected by the *Man* that ſhould go about to teach them Knowledge, on the account of their Weakneſs and Incapacity to receive it. *For precept*, ſays the ſame Prophet, muſt be upon *precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little*, the ſame Inſtructions repeated over and over, and broken into minute and ſmall portions, for fear of choaking or overcharging their Apprehenſion. And this general *Apoſtacy* from the Truth, this Night of Ignorance, that ſpread it ſelf over *Judah* and *Jeruſalem*, where yet the Law of God had publick Authority, and prevail'd, at leaſt in the open profeſſion of it, was yet ſo very great, that it had *wrapt* every Order and Diſtinction of Men under its *gloomy covert;* as we are aſſur'd by the Prophet *Jeremy* in other places, beſides the Chapter of my Text. In *one*, he had obſerv'd the groſs Ignorance, and corruption of Manners that prevail'd amongſt the *common People*, and was *weary to* ſee it: He makes the beſt excuſe for them however that he could, and ſays, *Surely theſe are poor, they are fooliſh,*

Iſaiah 28. 9, 10.

Verſ. 10.

Jerem. 5. 4, 5. *Iſ.* 1. 14.

for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God; that is, they had not those Opportunities, on account of the meanness of their Fortunes and Condition, to attain to any great Knowledge in the Affairs of Religion, that lay so quite beside their common and ordinary Conversation. But from Men of *Birth* and *Quality*, and *Capacity* and Opportunities of *Learning*, he expected other matters, as he tells us himself: *I will get me unto the great Men*, says he, *and will Speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God;* that is, they very well might and should have known it: But what account does he return us of *these* Men? why, that *these had altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds;* tho' they knew the Laws of God, and their Duty better than most other Men did, yet they look'd upon them as too great Restraints and Confinements on their Liberty, and *disdain'd*, and were impatient to get loose from under the *Yoke* and *Obligation*. And because there was no other way for them to be easy under these Resolutions, and this Temper of Mind, than either not *to think* at all of Religion, or to bring themselves to a *stubborn disbelief* of it; for that reason, and from what we see some Men of their *Posterity* and *Quality* follow at this day, we may easily guess what Methods they took in order to so very *Honourable* a Design.

We see then, how great a swerving and declension there was from the Truth of Religion, both in the Principles and Manners of Men, in the Jewish Church and Nation, at the time, when God thought it necessary, by the *Power* of his *Spirit* in his Prophet *Jeremiah*, to *stir* up and *awaken* the Sense of the Kingdom, by his bold and resolute protesting against the Vices and Corruptions of the Times he liv'd in; in whatsoever *Order* or *Character* of Men they were found, whether in Church or State. And this he went on to do, notwithstanding their defiance of his Au-

Authority, their ſecret Threats or more open Combinations againſt his Perſon, or any Pains or Dangers he ſuſtain'd at their Hands in the ſteddy proſecution of his Duty. For to that purpoſe indeed, God had ſome time before *prepar'd* and Strengthen'd him when he gave him his Prophetical Commiſſion, at his very entrance on his Office; as we read in the firſt Chapter of his Prophecy, 17,18,and 19*th* Verſes: *Thou therefore gird up thy loins*, ſays God to him, *and ariſe, and ſpeak unto them all that I command thee: be not diſmay'd at their faces, leſt I confound thee before them. For behold I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls againſt the whole land; againſt the kings of Judah, againſt the princes thereof, againſt the prieſts thereof, and againſt the people of the Land. And they ſhall fight againſt thee, but they ſhall not prevail againſt thee, for I am with thee, ſaith the Lord, to deliver thee.* And ſo we are ſure he has always *been*, and, we may depend upon it, ever will be, with thoſe his faithful Servants, who ſhall dare maintain his Cauſe, the *Cauſe* of *Truth* and *Right*, at the expence of their own preſent Eaſe, Intereſt and Safety, whatever *ſecret* or open *Counſel of wicked* Men, may riſe againſt them, *Pſal.64.2.* or howſoever any powerful *Combination* of *Worldly Politicians* may contrive to overthrow them.

And *as long* as every Church and Kingdom is liable to the ſame *Diſorders* and *moral Diſtempers*, in the Frame and Conſtitution of it, that we are ſure, the *Jewiſh* labour'd under: *As long* as there may be Reaſons of State and Government, or preſent Safety, that may ſeem to make it *neceſſary* ſometimes, that there ſhould be a wry Turn given to the Principles of Religion, by a *ſort of Men* who have Themſelves before acted contrary to it; and who would be otherwiſe very *Uneaſy*, and *fling* about them with *Impatience*, if Religion ſhould be kept up in its *pure genuine Truth* and *Luſtre*, to their utter Shame and Condemnation; *As long* as Men of *little*, *or no Religion*

them-

themſelves, in point of *Principles*, and of looſe and *profligate Lives*, in point of *Practice*, may have it in their Power to joyn their mutual Aſſiſtance to encourage one another, and to corrupt the reſt of the World, and to run down and diſcountenance the *Truth of God*, and the *Profeſſors* of it: *As long* as moſt Men's ſecular Advantages may lie at the *controul* and diſpoſal of others, *that mind their own things only*, and are not heartily affected to the Intereſts of Religion: *As long* as theſe things may be ſo; *ſo long* we are ſure the *Church of God* muſt be in *Danger* of general, grievous, and diſaſtrous Corruptions: and *ſo long*, there will always need ſome Men of *ſhining Piety*, of a *ſublime* and *generous* Zeal for the Honour of God and Religion, who ſhall dare *appear*, be able to *oppoſe*, and effectually give a *Stand* to the Torrent of Iniquity, which is ready to *overwhelm* the Age: and without ſuch Men, we may hope and pray, that God will never leave his Church, in the times of her Deſtitution, and Calamity, whenſoever they ſhall happen: Such *true ſons of our Holy Mother the Church*, of her own *bringing up*, and *nurſing* by *her ſide*, *that have been dandled upon her knees*, and *ſuck'd the breaſts* of her pureſt Doctrine, that, in the day of her Enemies, ſhall *own* her, ſhall *take her by the hand*, be her true *Support* in *Weakneſs*; *guide* and direct her to the means of her Recovery, and lead her in the ways of Truth and Peace. Which brings me to my *Second* Obſervation from the Text.

Phil. 2. 21.

Iſaiah 66. 11, 12.

Iſa. 51. 18.

Namely, The *method* the Holy Prophet here preſcribes to the *Jewiſh* Church and Nation, for a remedy for all thoſe *fatal Diſorders* they were under; and what was to be the great ſubject Matter of all their Search and Enquiries, to wit, the *old Truths* and Principles of Religion; *Stand in the ways, and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way*. Under which Head I cannot but think it neceſſary to conſider, what advantage of Argument, the former prevailing *Authority*, and *Antiquity* of a Doctrine of Religion *has*, to

its

its being ſound and good: for ſo we find both *Characters* here joyn'd together by the Holy Prophet, *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*

Not that all ways are *good* which are Old, neither; for then Idolatry might claim a right of *Preſcription*, in compariſon of what has been Since, to be the *Religion* of the World; it having continued longer, and with leſs Interruption in moſt parts of the Earth, and made a more Univerſal Spread than any one at preſent. And yet we know that the *true worſhip* of God, takes place even of *that*, in point of *Antiquity*, and was deriv'd down, *through one line* at leaſt, from the *Creation* of the World to the Flood; and from thence to *Abraham the Father of the Faithful*, in whoſe Family it took up its perpetual abode, till *the fulneſs of time was come*, at the appearance of our bleſſed Saviour. So that ſtill we ſee that the *good paths* of Duty are the *oldeſt* too, and have the Precedence in point of Time, as well as of Perfection. And ſince the Reformation of the World, by the Goſpel of our Lord, we muſt date the *Truth* and *Authority* of Religion from the *Antiquity* of it; becauſe 'tis impoſſible that any *Doctrine* or *Precept* of Religion ſhould be true, that was not at firſt deliver'd by *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, and maintain'd by the firſt and pureſt Ages of the Church. And therefore all other more modern Pretences, how *enlightening* ſoever they may ſeem, are but Innovations of Men of *corrupt Minds*, and baſe Intereſts, Sway'd by their Pride, or Paſſion, or Luſt, or Humour to wreſt, and pervert, and *barter* the Word of God, in order to raiſe themſelves a *Character*, or to *flatter* and *comply* with other Men's Vices, thereby to procure their own *Advancement*. Such are all thoſe novel Expoſitions of the Articles of our Church and Holy Faith, that have appear'd of late amongſt us; which ſpeak in a language unknown to *Antiquity*, which *break* up the *old Foundations*, and put the Strength of Chriſtianity upon the *Sandy* bottom of new, weak, ſubtile and trifling Argu-

2 *Tim.* 3 8.

2 *Corin.* 2. 17.

guments, which ſerve only to betray it; That, under a pretence of late Improvements, and a more perfect way of *Reaſoning*, have endeavour'd to Slurr and Slight the Doctrines of our Religion, and Myſteries of our Faith, which ſtand upon the Authority of God Himſelf.

But where is now that *Beauty of Holineſs*, that *primitive venerable Simplicity* of *Religion*, under which *Chriſtianity* appear'd, in Times of *Old*, adorn'd like a *reverend Matron*, with a *native Strength* and *Grace*, inimitable by all the Tricks and Refinements of theſe *Gentlemen* of *Reaſon!* But now we have her trimm'd
*Prov.*7.10 like a *ſtrange woman, in the attire of a harlot*, painted with falſe Colours, and dreſs'd in all the *wantonneſs* of Men's extravagant *Schemes* and *Fancies*; ſunk from that *Reverence* and *Dignity*, by which ſhe *once* ſtruck an awful Love upon the Eyes of all that beheld her; and made now baſely *to ſerve with men's ſins*,
*Iſa.*43.24. and to *truckle* under their unrighteous Deſigns and vicious Intereſts. Take but the *Church of England*, as it ſtood from the firſt Days of Queen *Elizabeth*, till about the Death of *Charles the Martyr*, and how unlike Her ſelf does ſhe *now* appear! That Her primitive Fathers and Paſtors would not know Her; the Strength and Sinews of Her *Diſcipline* ſo broken, the pure Fountains of Her Doctrine ſo polluted, ſo many of thoſe who attend Her Altars, and act in Her ſacred Rites and Myſteries, ſo utterly gone off, and *eſtrang'd* in their Principles from Her; and going ſo directly counter to Her Tenets, and deareſt Safety in their Practice! But if ever we would *again* be a *wiſe* and *happy* People, 'tis thither we muſt return from
Virgil. whence we are fallen; ' *Antiquam exquirite matrem:*
Æn 3. *Stand in the ways and ſee, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls*——.

It ought in *reaſon* to be *one* Objection with us againſt any Doctrine or Interpretation in Points of Religion, that 'tis New; that 'twas never broach'd before

before, nor receiv'd in any *Churches of the Saints*; that we can ſee no clear undoubted Authority for it in the Word of God; That the Paſſages alledg'd thence to confirm it are *dubious*, or appear in its Favour *forc'd* and *violent*; That Men may have preſent Deſigns of their own to ſerve by it; and that the *Corruptions* of the Times we live in may give too much Countenance to it, and have made it perhaps *beneficial*, or almoſt *neceſſary* to be advanc'd, in order to take off the Reproach and Scandal of *former* Practices, or to juſtify the Iniquity of the *preſent*: Theſe are the Exceptions that any new Doctrines and Expoſitions in Religion are juſtly liable to; and therefore without the cleareſt Reaſon in the World, no wiſe Man would eaſily entertain them; there being ſo great an hazard in doing ſo, (eſpecially when they appear *againſt*, as well as *without* the Authority of ancient Times) whatever ſeeming *Subtilties* or *Niceties* of *Argumentation* may be made uſe of by Men of Parts to ſupport and promote them.

But now the primitive Truths of Religion carry a *plainneſs* and *veneration* in their Face; have good *Reaſon*, as well as the beſt *Authority* to ſhew for them; are not wrapt up *in*, nor to be drawn *out of*, the *thin Cobwebs* of *School* Diſtinctions; not intricated and intangled with Difficulties and Perplexities, that *witty* Men may make, and *wiſe* Men do not care to anſwer; but they are eaſy and level to common Apprehenſion; being intended by the Mercy and Goodneſs of Almighty God for the general Benefit and Happineſs of Mankind; ſo that *he that runs may read them, and the wayfaring Man, though a fool, cannot err therein.* Iſai. 35. 8.

I do not ſay, that the *newneſs* of any Doctrine is a ſufficient Reaſon why Men ſhould immediately reject it, unleſs it carries an open Abſurdity in it, and a plain Inconſiſtence with the *Analogy* of Faith. But 'tis certainly one of the *beſt Reaſons* in the World for our *Caution*, and utmoſt Examination of it; and that we take care we are not fond of embracing it, out of an *itch* and humour of *Novelty*; till we ſee much better Arguments for it, than we are ſure there are againſt it; eſpecially when the Rom. 12. 6.

whole weight of Authority leans quite on the other ſide of the Queſtion. And if it comes with no better Authority than of the Men that firſt advance it; and does not bring with it indiſputable Reaſon, to balance the Authority of our own excellent Church, the primitive Church, and all the beſt Churches in the World; he, that ſhall then demand other Men's Submiſſion to his Doctrine of this nature, only ſhews the greatneſs of his own *Modeſty*, and may, no doubt, expect to meet with a ſuitable Entertainment from the World.

And yet we know, how by the cunning and *artful* Sophiſtry of a late Writer, (whoſe Name is deſervedly *Odious* amongſt good Men) and his vain and empty Appearance of cloſe Reaſoning, upon a wrong and rotten Foundation, one of the *principal* Doctrines of *Chriſtianity*, and of the *Church of England*, has been ſhaken; and almoſt ſubverted: had not the Good Providence of God ſtepp'd in to prevent it, in a great meaſure, by the Sufferings of *Another; Sufferings*, ſomewhat like thoſe the Doctrine it ſelf teaches, and like thoſe, by which it was at firſt promoted in the early Preachers of the Goſpel.

But this comes of that proud conceited Humour, that fulneſs of Spirit, that prevails ſo much of late, in one Sort of Men; and from their Setting up only for themſelves, and rejecting all manner of Authority whatſoever they don't like; that is, all the *Opinions* of *all the wiſe and good Men* in the World, even of the Church of God it ſelf, and relying only on their own *ſhallow, empty, bloated* Reaſon. By which means, ſome of theſe admir'd Gentlemen run into downright Hereſy; others have entertain'd ſuch a *Latitude* in Opinions: others, ſuch a ſett of *odd, ſingular, ſeparating Notions*, as are both to their own great Unhappineſs, and odious and offenſive to all the World, beſides themſelves.

Theſe Men tell us, they will take nothing upon *Authority;* I wiſh they would not in ſome caſes, and then we ſhould not ſo often ſee them follow others, as they now do, with no better Reaſon. But is the *Authority* of the *Church of God* in all former Ages, and the preſent, nothing? Are the Opinions of all the wiſe and good Men

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that have been in the World before us to be rejected, because these Men were not the first Inventers of them? If an Opinion of the Church, universally receiv'd in former and present Times, had not much Reason otherwise on its side, yet if it had no Reason to shew in the least *against* it; that I am sure a modest and ingenuous Man would think a very good Reason *for* it; (I am sure the *Apostle* thought so in this case) at least, it is a *Reason*, why a Man should not pertly, and forwardly, and impudently Oppose it; and betray his own want of Sense and Modesty, by running so directly cross to that of all Mankind besides. 1 Cor. 11. 16.

Authority, 'tis true, must never prevail *against* clear Reason, let it be never so ancient; but when there is no Reason against a Doctrine, and (which is our case) the best Reason in the World for it, and the whole *Stream* of *Antiquity* flowing in to us besides, he, that does not satisfy himself to believe as other Men do in this case, whatever specious Pretences he may make, does not so much intend to *improve*, as to *perplex* and intangle the Truth; nor does he really discover his Charity to Mankind, by venting and propagating his new, raw, indigested Notions, but his *Pride*, and *Singularity*, and Conceitedness of his own Reason. I have stay'd too long on this point, tho' I am sensible, it was never more necessary and seasonable than at present.

I come now to my *Third* Observation from the Words of my Text, what is the proper *End*, and ought to be the true Design of all our Enquiries and Discoveries in Religion, the right Government of our Lives and Practice by its Rules and Precepts, when we are once rightly inform'd of them in our Minds and Judgments: *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein:* For without this, our Knowledge is our Reproach, and good Principles the greatest marks of shame we can carry about us; rendring our *Faults* and *Miscarriages* the more *Notorious*, our *Persons inexcusable*, and our *Characters inconsistent*. Without this, how *high flown* soever we may be in our Professions, how Zealous soever in our Protestations, how active soever in our Prosecutions of

an honeſt Cauſe, we are yet ſtill but *Hypocrites* in *diſ-guiſe*, and do our excellent Church and Religion more real *Diſgrace* and *Diſſervice*, by the Looſeneſs of our Example, than we can do it good by all our Intereſt, our Places, our Power, or Authority.

Don't we ſee, by a *late* Inſtance, how ready Prophane and Atheiſtical Men are, (as they have always been) to ſtain and ſlur a *good Cauſe* it ſelf, by endeavouring to fix an immoral, tho' undeſerv'd Character, on the Perſons that appear'd in the Defence and Support of it; by tranſlating their own Sins and real Shame on a *Man* ſo much better than Themſelves. In which malicious Deſigns of theirs, we know, and may thank God, they were ſo happily miſtaken this time, and hope they will always be ſo, in any other caſe of a like nature, as well as in the Succeſs of all their own ill Deſigns at all times. But ſtill we muſt own, theſe Men were very much in the right in the general (however miſtaken in the particular Application) that the neareſt and moſt probable way to caſt a foul *aſperſion* and *blot* on a good Cauſe is to weaken the *good Opinion*, and to ſink the *Authority* of thoſe that are concern'd in its Defence, by reflecting on their *Morals*. And if ſo, *what manner of Perſons then ought we to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs*, not knowing how ſoon we may be call'd to anſwer for the Truths of our Religion before *Men;* and, we may be ſure, not long after, at the *awful Tribunal* of *God*, the Judge of all Men, for the Scandal we ſhall otherwiſe have given to Religion, by our careleſs or profligate Demeanour.

Surely a warm, zealous, lewd, vicious *Church of England Man*, is one of the greateſt Contradictions in the World. To hear a Man talk looſely and prophanely, ſwear and blaſpheme, and at the ſame time Vow that he will *ſtand* by the Church's Cauſe as long as he lives, when he is ready to *fall* by his own Intemperance, is a thing ſo nauſeous, that a Man muſt be paſt all *ſenſe* and *apprehenſion* himſelf, that does not think his Company has *enough* left to take notice of it, and be offended at it; and if he knows they may be ſo, can he offer a greater

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affront to their Converſation? For God's Sake *then*, for the Sake of our *Holy Religion*, for *our own* Sake, for our *Enemies* Sake, let us cut off this Handle, at leaſt, from them that Hate us, and prevent all Exceptions, of this ſort however, againſt our ſelves. Let us endeavour to anſwer the Purity and Holineſs of our Principles and Profeſſion, by the Regularity and Exactneſs of our Manners. This God, we ſee, expects from us as the true end and iſſue of all our Studies and Improvements in Knowledge; and this we muſt do, if ever we intend to be really uſeful to our Country, or find any true Quiet, or well grounded Satisfaction at home, within our own Breaſts and Conſciences. From whence I paſs to my

Fourth and Laſt *Obſervation* from the Text, What would be the bleſſed End and Conſequence of ſuch a Courſe, and what good Effects ſuch a deſirable *Return*, both in *Knowledge* and *Practice*, would work for us, a reſtitution of us from under our preſent deplorable diſtracted State, to our former happy Days and peaceful Enjoyment of our Selves and Country; that this is the only method to ſave us from our Ruine, and that nothing elſe will do it: *See, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls.* If ever we deſire to be a free and happy People, the *Truth*, as our Bleſſed Saviour tells us, *muſt make us ſo;* Ignorance and Error, Diſquiet and Perplexity being inſeparable Companions; the former filling either the publick or private ſtate of Man, wherever they reſide, with the latter, with Diſorder and Confuſion, and every thing that is Evil. *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked*; and again, *the wicked are like a troubled ſea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt.* A Man under the poſſeſſion of *perverſe* and *reprobate* Principles is in a violent ſtate, carried by a wrong *biaſs*, and can never be eaſy, either to himſelf or others. All *Error* is a *reſtleſs* and *turbulent* thing, perpetually working in the *lees*, and always changing and ſhifting from one Point of the Compaſs to another, becauſe it can find no fix'd Central reſt in any one. Whereas *Truth* is ever *regular*, and *congenial* with, and

John 8. 32.

Iſai. 57. 20, 21.

fits

ſits *eaſy* upon the Mind of Man; and where-ever 'tis, it convinces, clears, calms and cheriſhes the Heart, on which it *ſhines*. But theſe are but *wide* and *general* Conſiderations. Let us now ſurvey theſe Truths *exemplified* in *particular*, in the Publick State: Where we may ſee how miſtaken and wrong Notions, in Religion or Politicks, *quite raviſh the Spheres of Government*, and *put them into a preternatural courſe*; tending continually to *diſturb* and *overturn* what is already ſettled, and being able to *produce* and *eſtabliſh* nothing.

Bp. Wilkins Mat. Relig.

When, *once*, our own happy Government, both in Church and State, were at *firſt* violently *ſhock'd*, and *then* puſh'd from their ancient *baſis*, by the Roughneſs and Rebellion of thoſe Times, the *genuine* Iſſue of thoſe ill Principles ſome amongſt us maintain at preſent; what Peace and Quiet was then in our Land? was not *War* and *Strife* perpetually in our *Gates*? Could a Man go out, or come in with Safety? A Spirit of *Rout* and *Confuſion ſtalk'd* up and down our Country, and *Ruine* and *Deſolation* attended by its ſide! Religion and Liberty were the univerſal cry; but was there any thing *leſs* to be found amongſt us? Every Man almoſt had his different Religion, and all of them in the wrong; and hardly any Man had the ſame a Month together: till Men were grown quite Sick and Giddy with *Revolutions* (which is the uſual Effect of them indeed) and knew not *where* they *ſtood*, nor *what* they would be *changing* to. And ſhall we truſt thoſe dangerous *Tenets* again, and let the Folds of the *old Serpent* wind about us once more, till he has us *faſt*, and may hurry us into Ruine?

Men may *fancy*, may *proteſt*, may *declare* what they pleaſe, that there is no *Danger*; but if a true and genuine Cauſe never fails to produce its Effect, when all Circumſtances requiſite for acting are in the way; we may then depend upon it, that thoſe *Seditious*, *Republican*, *Atheiſtical*, *Impious*, Notions, that have been ſo much of late *broach'd*, *promoted*, and *encourag'd* in our Land, are a *ferment* lay'd within our Bowels, which when once it has *ſpread*, and *wrought* it ſelf to a *head*, muſt break out to the *endangering* our whole *State*, if not to our final Ruine.

Yet

Yet we don't ſeem to be apprehenſive of all this, and are angry with thoſe that would awaken us into a ſenſe of it! Under all theſe Weaknings and Diminutions of our happy Eſtabliſhment, we *fold our hands together, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace;* and the *gray hairs* of our decay *are here* and *there upon* us, and *we do not,* we *will* not *know it.* But, * *O that men were wiſe,* Hoſ. 7. 9. Deut. 32. 29. *that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end!* what the *end* of theſe things *will* be, what it *muſt* be, without a timely Return to our firſt Principles of Religion and Loyalty, to a true Knowledge and Practice of our Duty!

'Tis certain we are ſtrangely gone off from our *firſt love* Rev. 2. 4. to our Holy Mother the *Church of England;* and are *ſlidden back by a perpetual backſliding* for many Years together, Jerem. 8. 5. *encouraging* one another, and *comforting* our ſelves in *running* down and diſparaging thoſe excellent Doctrines of our Religion, upon which our main Security depends; upon which the Reign and Safety of our Moſt Excellent Sovereign, The *QUEEN* (whom God for ever Bleſs and Proſper) *the Anointed of the Lord, the Breath* Lam. 4. 20. *of our Noſtrils,* and the Welfare of all Her Kingdoms is ſupported.

Would any one have been bold to ſay, a few years ſince? that we ſhould have liv'd to ſee a *Doctrine* of Chriſtianity, I mean that of *Non-reſiſtance* to the ſupreme Power; a Doctrine authoriz'd and acknowledg'd for Divine by the conſtant Practice and Preaching of the primitive Church; and from thence deriv'd down to our own Times through many Ages, without Diſpute amongſt thoſe that held the † Truth; wrought into our own *Eſtabliſhment* as a *ſtrengthening* to the whole, *enacted* by the *legal Authority of England*; declar'd, acknowledg'd, and confirm'd by *both* our *Learned Univerſities,* yet to ſee this very Doctrine *ſpurn'd* at and *flouted,* by thoſe Men, who ſay too, they have ſome Religion; to ſee it rejected by its *former Friends* and *Patrons;* to ſee it dragg'd out to its Condemnation, with Shame and

* *This is the true Interpretation of that place in* Moſes *Song.*

† *For that the contrary Doctrine is Popiſh and Fanatical, ſee Dr.* Falkner *in his* Chriſtian Loyalty. Book 2. Chap. 1. Sect. 2. Paragr. 9, 10, 11.

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Contempt by its Enemies, and cenſur'd as a Principle dangerous and *damnable;* If this be not ſomething of a *Change* from what we were once, when or how ſhall we know there is any? or by what Signs or Tokens can we find it?

And yet this *Perfection* in *Revolt* we came to, by *gentle* and *leiſurely* Meaſures; firſt, by *breaking* in upon our Rules a *little*, as the *exigency* of times ſeem'd to make it *neceſſary;* but at firſt we were *modeſt:* in the next place by extenuating, then by juſtifying our Faults, and then by condemning, and cenſuring, and rejecting the Law it ſelf, againſt which we had offended.

The Meaſures, by which a *former* unfortunate Prince loſt his *Throne* and Kingdoms, *at firſt* were *Abdication: Now* they tell us 'twas **Reſiſtance;* and in time, I ſuppoſe, ſome Men may have the Confidence to *call* and *own it* by *another* Name———.

* *The Speeches that go under the* Names *of the Biſhops of* Sarum *and* Oxford.

Thus we find we are *unravell'd* by degrees, our Doctrines ſtruck at, one after another; the *threads* of our Conſtitution *pick'd* out, one by one, and the Principles of our Government *unhing'd.* And if our *kind* Enemies go on a little farther, we may be *quite chang'd in time*, and become *as they* are (which is as *bad* as poſſible) before we are *aware* of it, or almoſt ſenſible of the ſeveral ſtepps and degrees of our Alteration.

But by God's Grace and Mercy let us endeavour to preſerve, with a juſt Zeal and Concern, what we have, and try to recover what is loſt. Let us, in the *words*, and according to the *Advice* of the Holy Ghoſt to the Church of *Sardis*, upon a like occaſion; According to
Rev. 3.2,3. the counſel of that *All ſeeing* Spirit, *that knows our works that we have a name that we live*, and *yet are dead*; *Let us be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things that remain that are ready to die; for our works are not found perfect before God.*

God of his infinite Mercy grant, That we may *know thoſe things that belong to our peace, before they are for ever hid from our eyes*, for Jeſus Chriſt his ſake, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be aſcrib'd all Praiſe, Honour, Power, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

Φ. T. 22
Hereford
1945